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**Sarah Champion**  
**Member of Parliament for Rotherham**

**Immediate release**  
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**A new report shows child victims of crime are much higher than police data has previously indicated**

A report commissioned by All Party Parliamentary Group for Victims and Witnesses of Crime, chaired by the Member of Parliament for Rotherham, Sarah Champion, along with Victim Support, has said that children need lessons in understanding what crime is, how they can protect against being a victim of crime, and what to do if they become a victim.

The report paints a shocking picture that shows children and young people experience much higher rates of crime than police data suggests. For instance, the report finds that 85% of children do not report thefts to the police. Similarly, between 87% and 95% of children experiencing child sexual abuse do not report it to an adult at the time.

The research, carried out by the University of Bedfordshire, also finds that children are not always aware of what constitutes a crime – so do not realise that they are a victim of crime. The report discovered the context in which a crime is committed affects a child's perception of whether it is indeed a crime. For example, a theft committed by a child's classmate would not be seen by the child as the same as a theft committed by a stranger.

The emotional effects of reporting crime are also considered. Many children blame themselves for their victimisation; others worry about the repercussions of reporting crime, amongst their social groups for instance.

Commenting on the report, Sarah Champion said:

*"I believe that there is a real duty for society to teach children about what a crime is, and what help is available to them if they have been a victim of crime. This could be done through incorporating teaching about crime and victimisation into PSHE lessons in schools.*

*"However, there is also a role for the police to play, in showing young people that they are taken seriously by officers when they are reporting a crime. Many of the children taking part in the research said that they did not feel they were able to report to the police because they did not trust them. This is a very serious finding and something the police must take note of as a matter of priority.*

*"I have worked extensively on child sexual exploitation, both in my Rotherham constituency and in Parliament. Through this, I have seen first-hand that there is a long way to go until child victims are given the recognition that they deserve. This report highlights scale of child crime and the importance of getting the right support for child victims."*

ENDS

**Notes to editors:**

[1] The All Party Parliamentary Group for Victims and Witnesses of Crime sought evidence from statutory agencies, victim service providers, charities and campaigners on the true extent of child victimisation and the reasons why children do not report crime to the police. The group has also partnered with Bedfordshire University in order to explore the issue directly with children, using focus groups and analysing data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales. The inquiry aimed to capture information on three main things:

- The recorded levels of crime and victimisation experienced by children and young people in England and Wales;
- Potential forms and levels of unreported crime and victimisation; and
- Reasons for non-reporting of such experiences.

Four short work-streams were undertaken in order to collate relevant information. These were:

- A short review of relevant published UK literature;
- A review of existing statistical data on children's and young people's experiences of crime and reporting patterns of the same;
- Three focus groups with 26 young people, to get their views on these issues; and
- A call for evidence to statutory agencies, victim service providers, charities and campaigners.

[2] The report's specific recommendations for schools are:-

Schools should train all staff and teachers to enable them to identify signs of victimisation and advise students on how to report crimes and access support services.

Crime education should be included in the PHSE curriculum, covering how to avoid becoming a victim of crime, how to recognise when they have become a victim of crime, how to report the crime and how to access support services.

[3] HMIC's assessment of each force for police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy recommended police officers get specific training to handle crimes such as cyber-bullying and child sexual exploitation. <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/find-your-force/>

[4] Sarah Champion is the MP for Rotherham elected in November 2012 and is the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Victims and Witnesses of Crime. Sarah chaired a Parliamentary Inquiry into child sexual exploitation and following the Alexis Jay report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham she employed a full time child sexual exploitation specialist worker. Prior to becoming a Member of Parliament, Sarah was the Chief Executive of Bluebell Wood Children's Hospice. <http://www.sarahchampionmp.com/>

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